

1, In the Gospel Jesus talks about an Old Testament image to Nicodemus, member of the Synedrion, as a first component of a parallel: the image is about Moses lifting up a stick in the desert on which there is a snake. A dead snake. Above all, we see people of Israel standing all around Moses, looking upon that snake. Moses told them that if they looked upon that dead snake, they must have remembered, that they had been saved. A strange instruction from Moses and a strange image connected to a dead snake as well as to the Son of Man. What does it mean?

Walking through the desert – where there is no civilisation, there is no comfort offered by a well organised society, there is no doctor, or ambulance... etc. - meeting a snake meant real danger. If one of the people of Israel was bit by a poisonous snake at that time it meant to die for sure. It meant a painful death full of suffering. Moses killed a serpent probably a poisonous one, he put it on a stick and showed them up. Look: there is no more danger around you! Look you are safe! You are not endangered any more by sudden and painful death! You are saved!

Jesus said to Nicodemus: “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

Jesus foretells his own fate: he, the Son of Man must be lifted up as the serpent of the desert. This might have been an obscure parallel to Nicodemus. Lifted up as a dead serpent? Pardon? On a stick? Jesus looks upon his mission this way: serpent meant real danger for the people and so did sin that separated them from God’s love. Sin that keeps us away from God means a painful and lonely death for sure. There is no help around, we are defenceless against suffering caused by the poison of sins. The Son of man had come to be killed - like the serpent before, and to become a sign to make the people remember: no more danger of poisonous sins around you anymore. You can wander on freely with the Son of Man, because you are safe. My death, my corpus on the cross – says Jesus, is going to mean that you are safe from the danger of your sins. Look upon me to remember.

Like when Jesus said to Peter walking on the windy sea towards him: Peter look at me, into my eyes and you can do everything, you are safe to come to me. Please do not forget about it: look upon the Son of Man to remember that you are saved.

Being saved from sin. What is salvation? People of Israel, the Pharisees even Saint Paul taught before he met Christ that one had to work hard on his own salvation. Saul (who became Paul) was a good Pharisee, he believed in the power of this kind of self-salvation. This is the big difference between Jewish and Christian faith: the Pharisees believed that they could save their own souls. From this perspective there is no need to know Christ. This is what Paul understood on the road of Damascus – Christ had redeemed us from our sins. There is no more need of self-salvation. He had redeemed us before we could do anything to get rid of your sins.

But what is sin? I think sin is a kind of behaviour that keeps us away from God's tender and generous love. God's true love for us. The nature of true love is like this: gives us no assumptions, accepts us as we are just because we are, there is no need to do anything for it. It is simply given to us. God's love is generous, like a mother's. If a baby's nappy smells bad, because it is full, a mother does not throw away the baby. Rather she changes the baby's nappy and cleans the baby and loves him. God does not throw us away because of the bad smell of our sins, but cleans us, loves us and throws away our sins.

We believe that God loved us before we did anything for our salvation. We cannot clean ourselves from our sins but through Christ, God can. From this faith our deeds come: not because of self salvation but we need to change our lives because of God's love. We answer him this way.

Jesus said to Peter walking on the windy sea towards him: Peter look at me, into my eyes, and you can do everything, you are safe to come to me. Please – dear brothers and sisters in Christ – do not forget about it: look at Jesus to remember that you are saved. Jesus had been lifted up. We must look upon him and remember we are redeemed. This is the Good News for today and forever!

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